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CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

By HORACE DAVIS

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CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN.*

[Reprinted from the *Unitarian Review*.]

When Mendez Pinto, the Portuguese sailor, who discovered Japan in 1542, returned to Goa, he took with him Anjiro, a Japanese, who afterwards became a Roman Catholic. Francis Xavier asked Anjiro whether the Japanese were likely to accept Christianity. Anjiro replied, "They will not immediately assent to what I say; but they will investigate what is said concerning religion by a multitude of questions, and, above all, by observing whether my conduct agrees with my words. This done, the Daimios, the nobility, and the adult population will flock to Christ; for they are a nation which always follows reason as a guide." Xavier carried the cross to Japan, and Anjiro's promise was in a measure fulfilled. The Catholic Church soon numbered its converts by hundreds of thousands. But, after a brief season of prosperity, Japanese Christianity was crushed out of existence by violence and persecution; and the empire returned into the old faith. To-day, Anjiro's promise again seems to be floating in the air; and there is a general impression that Christianity will soon become the prevailing religion of Japan.

This remarkable people have broken away from the domination of Chinese literature and ideas, which have hitherto been their only guide outside of themselves, and are looking to Europe and America for fresher and wider culture. It seems to be taken for granted that, as they have adopted our railroads and telegraphs, our ships and guns, our mili-

* For the historical information in this article, I have consulted Dr. Satow's *Hand-book of Japan*, Griffis's *Mikado's Empire*, and Rein's *Japan*. I am especially indebted to Rein, whose book is admirable. The account of existing missions is derived from Dr. Verbeck's *History of Protestant Missions in Japan*, and from Bible Society reports, and other documents furnished me by Rev. H. Loomis, of Yokohama, and Mrs. Dr. Buckley, of Kyoto.

tary discipline and our system of education, and have translated much of our literature into their own tongue, it is but one step more in the same direction to accept our religious faith. We seem to think they will take it because it is in the line of the present fashion.

Others with deeper insight tell us that the thinking men and women of Japan are dissatisfied with the lack of spirituality in their native faiths and the low level of practical morality there prevalent, and are turning to Christianity for a higher spiritual ideal, and hope thereby to elevate the plane of every-day life among their people. This is the position assumed by Mr. Matsumoto in his very thoughtful article in a recent number of the *Unitarian*. But he says the educated classes of Japan will have no sympathy with the old faiths and creeds of Christendom. They have no historic traditions or prejudices binding them to the past of Christianity, and will demand a free, rational faith, in harmony with the thought of the present age,— a faith which will receive the assent of their intellects, and whose practical workings will command the homage of their hearts. This agrees with what a young Japanese said to me one day in Tokio. He had been educated in America; and, as we were walking through Uyeno Park, he spoke of religion, and said to me: "Our people are philosophers. They will not accept Christianity till it comes to them in a rational form. They do not believe in miracles." And then he added that the most satisfactory preaching he ever listened to in America was from Unitarian pulpits.

Now, who are these people so near to the Chinese, and yet so different from them, who are calling on us to come over and help them? A brief statement of their origin and religious history will interest us, and at the same time may throw some light on their present attitude and needs.

At some very remote period, before the Christian era, a branch of the Tartar race landed in the southern part of these islands, finding there an inferior people, probably of Mongolian stock, whom they gradually conquered. The

two types of form and face are still plainly to be seen: the conquering race, of taller stature and lighter complexion, with oval face, aquiline nose, and oblique eyes, being more common in the cities, and especially among the upper classes; while the aborigines, with dark skin, short, squat figure, and flat face, form the agricultural laborers and the lower classes in the large towns.

The conquerors seem to have brought with them a form of the primitive worship of their race similar to the oldest Chinese religion which still survives in the Shinto worship of Japan. It comprised apparently a worship of the great influences of nature, which are the ruling powers of heaven and earth, reverence of the imperial family as the direct descendants of these divine powers, a deification of heroes, and a pious worship of ancestors. On this was overlaid at a later period, probably about the third century of our era, the Confucian system of morals, which blended with it as it did with the corresponding cultus in China, and formed its ethical side. Still later, about A.D. 552, Chinese Buddhism was introduced through Corea. A thousand years had elapsed since its birth in India, and it had lost its primitive simplicity. It brought with it a hierarchy containing an army of minor gods and saints; but, with all its crudities, it was better than the materialism of the old religion, and soon took root. I have no time to follow its growth, which was slow at first; but in four centuries it had become the dominant faith of Japan, reaching the climax of its power about the thirteenth century, at very nearly the same time that the Roman Catholic religion in Europe, which so much resembles it, was at the zenith of its power. The same causes which operated for the downfall of the Romish Church in Europe wrought great havoc to Buddhism in Japan. In the flush of power, the Church became corrupt, its officers arrogant and overbearing, its priests lazy and dissolute; and, when Christianity appeared on the scene, Buddhism had in a great measure lost the love and respect of the people.

The first contact of Europeans with Japan occurred in

1542, when some Portuguese sailors on a Chinese junk were driven ashore on one of the southern islands. They were kindly treated, for it will be borne in mind that this was seventy-two years before the edict which banished all foreigners and sealed up the ports of Japan. When these sailors returned to Macao, the story of their adventures reached the ears of Francis Xavier, the missionary saint of the Roman Church; and his heart was fired with the resolve to storm this stronghold of Satan and become the apostle of Japan. Taking with him two Jesuit priests and Anjiro, the Japanese convert mentioned above, he set sail for Kiushiu, where he landed in 1549.

Xavier seems to have been much pleased with the Japanese at first contact. In his *Epistolæ Japonicæ*, as quoted by Rein, he says no infidel nation has pleased him so much as this, which behaves so civilly and amicably, and is so free from treachery and malice. "I cannot cease," he continues, "from praising these Japanese. I am really charmed by them." This is very curious, and confirms to some extent the opinion of Anjiro, quoted above, as showing a hospitality for foreigners and foreign ideas very much the same as marks them to-day, all the more singular because so unlike their conservative Chinese neighbors. Indeed, it seems very likely that but for political considerations on the part of the reigning dynasty, Japan would have become a Roman Catholic country two centuries ago.

The success of the Jesuits was wonderful, although it varied very considerably in different parts of the country, depending very much on the countenance given them by the ruling powers of different provinces. In 1569, the Jesuits claimed thirty thousand converts in Japan; fifteen years later, they numbered one hundred and fifty thousand; and in 1587, when the first hostile movement was made upon them, the *Histoire de l'Eglise* asserts that they had two hundred thousand converts. Twenty years later, when the Japanese church was at its zenith, the Catholics claimed the amazing number of six hundred thousand proselytes; and the claim is allowed by conservative authorities. Other estimates ran as high as three times that number.

We inquire at once, What was the cause of this astonishing success? First, of course, the zeal, devotion, and exemplary lives of the early missionaries. It will be remembered that these events took place when the Jesuit organization was young and fresh, animated with burning zeal and devotion, and the men who landed in Japan were full of this spirit; there they found the soil ready prepared for them by the disaffection toward the Buddhist sects, of which I have already spoken. Nor was the transfer from the old ritual to the new any very violent wrench for the Japanese converts. The ceremonials of the two faiths were so much alike that Father Huc, when he saw the Buddhist processions in Tartary, declared that the devil had copied the true faith to lead souls astray. The priests in their gorgeous robes and their shaven crowns, the processions, the acolytes swinging smoking censers, the adoration of images, the vessels of holy water, the rosaries, the veneration of relics, the indulgences, the monasteries, the convents,—these and many other points of resemblance made the transition easy.

Still, all this would have been of no use without the countenance of the ruling powers, as later developments showed. The Jesuits were aided in their designs by the distresses under which the country was suffering at that time. When they landed in Japan, and for many years afterwards, the empire was threatened with political disintegration. The curious dual government, now extinct, but which had then been in existence five hundred years, seemed to be in the throes of dissolution. For several centuries, the Mikado, the nominal ruler, had been stripped of all actual power, and kept in a kind of sacred seclusion at Kyoto. There he maintained his petty court, his rounds of pleasure and ceremonial, while the real authority was wielded by the Shogun, or, as we say incorrectly, the Tycoon, at Kamakura. As fast as the Mikado became of age or grew restless in his gilded cage, he was forced to abdicate and become a Buddhist monk; and some little child of royal blood was created Mikado in his stead. The Shogunate also became hereditary, being vested at this time in the family of Ashikaga.

The weakness and wickedness of this family had greatly undermined its power; and, at the time of Xavier's landing, it was tottering to its fall.

The hold of the central government upon the Daimios was much weakened, and these local barons were doing very much as they pleased. The state of the country in many respects resembled England in the reign of Henry VI. This local independence of the Daimios favored the Jesuits; for the Portuguese trade, which the missionaries brought to the seaports where they were established, was very profitable to these local lords, and the priests made the best of their advantages to gain a foothold. The central government at Kyoto or Kamakura was powerless to prevent this, if it had so desired; for the Shogun had all he could do just then to keep his seat without provoking unnecessary hostility.

The general state of want and misery, caused by the disorganized condition of the empire, contributed in another way to the spread of Catholicism. The various Daimios were constantly at war with one another. The whole of Japan during this wretched period was convulsed with civil war, and the people were in great misery. Cities were sacked and burned over and over again, armies despoiled the people, much of the country was laid waste, and great suffering ensued. It was natural enough that the happiness of the faithful and the joys of paradise, as painted by the Jesuits, should charm the poor souls living in such wretchedness, especially as the Buddhist could only offer them after death a renewal of their earthly existence, perhaps with the same sorrows. While the civil war lasted, all these causes helped the missionary; and when at last, in 1573, the country gained comparative rest and peace under Nobunaga, the Jesuits found a friend in him,— not that he was a Christian, but he hated the pride and arrogance of the Buddhist sects; and the encouragement of Catholicism was one means of humbling these adversaries. All these causes worked together to favor the new faith. So that, when the embassy sent to Rome by the native Catholics kneeled before the holy father, Pope Sixtus V., in

1585, and received his blessing, the Japanese church numbered two hundred thousand members.

Soon after this came the first check to the movement. Nobunaga, the friend of the new faith, was murdered in 1582; and his successor, Hideyoshi, afterwards called Taikosama, was very unfriendly to the foreigners, so that in July, 1587, he issued an edict ordering the Jesuits out of the country. Persecutions were begun against the Catholics; and the first martyrs suffered death on July 27, 1589, at Funai in Bungo, the very place where the first conversions had taken place forty years before. The situation became more complicated and perilous by the arrival of Spanish Franciscans, who preached openly, even in Kyoto, the capital, defying the edict. The persecutions, which had slackened, were renewed; and in 1593 twenty-six Catholic priests were crucified at Nagasaki,— three Portuguese, six Spanish, and seventeen Japanese,— who were all canonized by Pope Pius IX. in 1862. The persecution seemed to be stimulated by political rather than religious motives. The foolish defiance of the foreign preachers brought down the hand of the government upon them for their direct and public violation of the law, not as a punishment for religious heresy. Taikosama suspected that the foreign preachers were undermining the loyalty of the Japanese to their own government; and his fears were aggravated by a foolish Spanish sea-captain, who told him that it was the custom of the Spanish government, when they wanted to conquer a new country, to send in their priests first; and, after they had converted the people to Catholicism, then they sent their armies to make Spaniards of them.

In 1603, Taikosama died; and a dreadful civil war ensued, closed by the decisive battle of Sekigahara, which made Iyeyasu real ruler of Japan. This remarkable man, the most distinguished in Japanese annals, crushed all opposition, and was made Shogun in 1603. The Japanese Catholics had at this time reached the enormous number of six hundred thousand; and among them were several Daimios, including some of the most distinguished generals in the

Japanese army. The support of these Catholic Daimios made Iyeyasu friendly to the Christians; and the new faith spread rapidly, especially in the north. At the same time, in other parts of the empire, the hostile edicts were enforced; and the adherents of old Japanese ideas punished their violation with persecution and torture.

But the imprudence of Spanish priests other than Jesuits at last alienated the good will of Iyeyasu. He became indignant at their defiance of the government, for the edicts banishing foreign priests had not been recalled; and, in 1614, he induced his son, Hidetada, who had succeeded him as Shogun, to reissue the edict of 1587. In its new form, it ordered the banishment of foreign priests, the destruction of Christian churches, and the return of the people to their native faith. In this proclamation, the great stress is laid not upon the religious, but upon the political side of the trouble. It alleges that the "Kirishitan" (Christians), meaning the foreign priests, propagate their evil doctrines in order that they may effect a change in the government of the country, and may be able to usurp the possession of it. This decree was followed by the banishment of three hundred priests, including twenty-two Franciscans, Dominicans, and Augustines, one hundred and seventeen foreign priests, and nearly two hundred Japanese, who were transported to Macao. Others fled to remote districts in Japan. Some of them afterwards emerged from their hiding-places, and some of the exiles returned, when in 1617 the Shogun Hidetada issued a new edict, condemning to death every foreign priest found in the country. Immediately, a most ferocious persecution broke out against the Christians in almost every part of the country, which continued with more or less violence under Hidetada and his successor, Iyemidzu, until by 1651 Christianity was almost entirely eradicated.

Before detailing the final steps by which this was effected and Japan was closed to foreign intercourse, let us look for the reasons which led to a course so contrary to the usual traditions of Japanese gentleness and hospitality. The Jap-

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anese have always been a teachable people, and when the first Catholic missionaries landed on their shores they welcomed them almost with open arms. Their prevailing religious faith, Buddhism, is a gentle and generous faith, nowhere else given to persecution, for it does not profess to hold sole control of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; nor did it claim such exclusive possession of Japan as might justify the use of violence in extirpating a rival, for the Shinto faith shared with it the favor of both government and people. What reasons, then, are assigned for this unexpected treatment of the new faith? The causes given by Rein in his History of Japan are as follows: First, the intolerance of the Jesuits themselves. Living in the age and full of the spirit of the Inquisition, they infused that temper into their followers, so that the Catholic Daimios treated their heathen subjects with a severity and intolerance which finally reacted upon the Christians themselves. They seized and destroyed the heathen temples, and in some cases compelled their subjects to be baptized into the Catholic faith. Then the mutual hostility of the Portuguese and Spanish priests, and of the different Catholic orders, made much trouble and injured the cause of the Church. These prejudices were much increased by the unholy lives and conduct of the traders and seamen at the ports, who indulged in wild excesses, and treated the natives with cruelty, even to buying up the desperately poor, and transporting them to foreign countries as slaves.

But over and above all these reasons was the fear that the Catholic religion weakened the loyalty of the people; and, as stated above, that their conversion was the result of deep-laid schemes by the European Catholic powers, whereby they might eventually get possession of Japan, as they had already seized upon other countries in the East Indies. This suspicion was not unlikely fostered by the English and Dutch agents, who were at the same time seeking to gain a foothold in Japan. The perils of the Spanish Armada and the brutal cruelties of Alva were still fresh in their minds, and they were not likely to be very scrupulous as to the

means of preventing an increase of Spanish power. But, whatever were the motives, the work was done effectually and without mercy. "The description of the torments to which the Christians were subjected," says one author, "reads like a chapter out of Dante's *Inferno*." "The persecutors were not content," says Rein, "with the ordinary modes of hanging, crucifying, drowning, beheading, but flung the victims down from high precipices, burned them alive, had them torn asunder by oxen, tied them up in rice sacks of plaited straw, which were then heaped up and set on fire, or put them in cages with provisions before their eyes, where they were allowed to perish of hunger." Captain Cocks, of the East Indian Company, who visited Japan in 1619, remarks: "The Christians suffered as many sorts of death and torments as those in the primitive persecutions; and such was their constancy that their adversaries were sooner weary of inflicting punishment than they of enduring the effects of their rage. Very few, if any at all, renounced their profession. The most hideous forms in which death appeared would not scare them, nor all the terrors of a solemn execution overpower that strength of mind with which they seemed to go through their sufferings." Griffis, after describing their terrible trials, closes as follows: "If any one doubt the sincerity and fervor of the Christian converts of to-day, or the ability of the Japanese to accept a higher form of faith, or their willingness to suffer for what they believe, they have but to read the accounts presented in English, Dutch, French, Latin, and Japanese, of various witnesses to the fortitude of the Japanese Christians of the seventeenth century. The annals of the primitive church furnish no instances of sacrifice or heroic constancy in the Coliseum or in the Roman arenas that were not paralleled on the dry river beds and execution grounds of Japan."

If space permitted, I would give more of the details of this heroic story; for it effectually refutes the charge that the Japanese are a frivolous, pleasure-loving people, incapable of deep sentiment or noble self-sacrifice. But I hasten to the end of the sad story. Shortly after issuing

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the dreadful edict of 1617, the Shogun Hidetada, in pursuance of his policy of stamping out foreign influence in Japan, published another decree limiting foreign residents to the two ports of Hirado and Nagasaki. In 1621, he forbade the Japanese to leave their own country, and three years later all foreigners were banished, except the Chinese and the Dutch, who were limited to a residence on the little island of Deshima in Nagasaki harbor; and thus Japan was sealed up to all foreign influences for two hundred and thirty years.

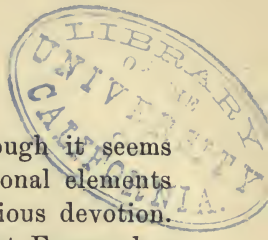
At the same time, the campaign against the Catholic churches was begun with fresh vigor. This fearful persecution continued, with intermissions of relief, for many years, without any resistance on the part of the sufferers. At last, goaded to desperation by their afflictions, some thirty or forty thousand gathered together from various parts of the country in the old castle of Arima and in the neighboring islands. There they prepared to defend themselves against their persecutors, and maintained their position for nearly forty years. But in 1677 this *quasi* rebellion was put down by the Shogun's armies, aided, it is said, by Dutch cannon; and a frightful massacre took place, in which thirty thousand are said to have perished. Thousands were hurled into the sea from the cliffs of Pappenberg, an island at the mouth of the Nagasaki harbor, which is always pointed out to travellers for its associations with this melancholy story.

The capture of Arima and the massacre of Shimabara apparently wiped out the last vestiges of Christianity in Japan. The proclamations against the "wicked sect" of "Kirishitan" (Christians) were posted in every part of the empire, where they remained until 1876, after the overthrow of the Shogun, when they were withdrawn by the Mikado. But the Catholic faith still maintained a secret and perilous existence in the north-western part of Kiushiu, near Nagasaki and Arima. Mothers secretly marked their children with the sign of the cross, fathers initiated their sons into the mysteries of the faith as into some secret

society; and thus it was stealthily transmitted in families for generations. A curious story of a Japanese Protestant convert meeting such a man, in whose family the lamp of faith had been kept secretly burning for ten generations, is told in the Louisville *Christian Observer* of March 30, 1887.

In 1868, long after Commodore Perry's treaty, but before the downfall of the Shogun, the edicts against the profession of Christianity in Japan were renewed, in spite of the remonstrances of the foreign ministers; and the same year the Japanese government was startled to discover at Urakami, a town near Nagasaki, a community of three thousand persons among whom the Christian religion had been maintained for two hundred and thirty years, ever since the days of the Shimabara massacre. The Shogun ordered them to be exiled from their homes and scattered as laborers in the different provinces. Some of them were sent off; but, before the sentence could be executed on all, the Shogun's power was ended. The Mikado rescinded the decree, and the poor people returned to their homes. It would be very interesting to know what form the Catholic faith had assumed after two centuries and a half of complete isolation from the rest of the world; but our information is very scanty, and what I have narrated is substantially all I have been able to gather about this subject.

This, then, was all that survived of the mighty church, numbering six hundred thousand souls, built up by seventy years' hard work and patient endurance of the Catholic missionaries. The Portuguese monks were in Japan from 1549 to 1617; and what was left to show for their labors and suffering? A dozen Portuguese words adopted into the Japanese language, the use of fire-arms and tobacco, and a few scattered families transmitting the faith in secret, but not daring to confess their convictions openly. Although the Catholic faith had been freely propagated for nearly three generations, it left no trace on the Japanese people. Their religion, their literature, their art, so far as I know, bear no mark of any influence from the Catholic Church. This is certainly remarkable, and shows how little hold



it had upon the thought of the people, though it seems to have been strongly rooted in those emotional elements of their nature which are the germs of religious devotion. The converse statement is equally true,— that Europe has derived no knowledge of Japan from either the Spanish or Portuguese missionaries. What we knew of that people prior to 1860 was derived almost entirely from the patient observations and careful records of the Dutch residents at Nagasaki, especially the physicians, whose accounts of the country and people are of very great value.

The final edict excluding all foreigners and closing the ports of Japan against foreign commerce was issued, as already stated, in 1624. The final extirpation of Christianity by the massacre of Shimabara took place in 1677. Peace came to Japan, but it was the peace of stagnation. Buddhism resumed its sway, as dry and dead as the popular religions of China. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, according to Satow, an effort was made among the aristocracy to revive the Shinto religion. This was the natural outcome of the reforms in the social system as introduced by Iyeyasu, after his great victory at Sekigahara, in 1603. He divided the nation on a feudal basis into orders of society, or castes, in some respects as sharply defined as those of India, and prescribed rigid rules of etiquette to be observed when the different orders met. Now Buddhism, a religion which puts all men on a spiritual level, was not in sympathy with such a movement as this. Buddhism met the wants of the common people, but its levelling tendency was distasteful to the aristocracy. Shintoism, with its worship of ancestry, its deification of emperors and heroes, and its reverence for the past, was much more satisfactory to the proud nobility, especially to the exclusive Samurai, the military order,— the two-sword men, as they were afterwards called.

But the effort to breathe life into its dry bones was of little avail. At the time Commodore Perry made his treaty in 1854, Buddhism was the only religion in Japan having any vitality. It had adopted the Shinto saints and invaded

their temples: the two religions existed side by side, often in the same building. When the Shogun laid down his authority in 1868, and the rule of the empire passed into the hands of the Mikado after a suspension of his authority for seven hundred years, a second effort was made to revive Shintoism, this time by the Mikado's government. The restoration of the Mikado being a revival of the political traditions of that early period, it was thought that a restoration of Shintoism would strengthen it; for it is the native faith of Japan, based on its historic traditions. Being a worship of ancestry, its customs, rituals, processions, costumes, music, dances, are all a revival of the olden time and of patriotic associations. The Mikado was logically bound to sustain it, because, as the direct descendant of the Shinto gods, his religious, patriotic, and domestic duties converge at the Shinto shrine.

To this end, the government laid a heavy hand on the Buddhists. They were ejected from the Shinto temples they had occupied. The Shinto sanctuaries were rebuilt or renovated, the Buddhist allowance from the government was cut off, while a Department of Religion was established at Tokio, to superintend the revival of the old faith. But it was a futile attempt. Shintoism could not be galvanized into life. It had no hold on the heart of the people; for, as a public religion, it was a mere ceremonial, without lofty ideas or code of ethics. It keeps its place in government State ceremonials; for the Mikado, being descended from the Shinto gods, must pay due respect to his ancestors. It has its grand public parade days at its time-honored temples like Nara; and it still holds its place at the little family shrine in the household, where the memory of the ancestors is reverently preserved, as the Lares and Penates were worshipped in the Roman household. But, as a system of religious faith, it is utterly dead. Buddhism, even without the sanction of the Mikado, has thrust it to one side again, and resumed what little hold it had upon the people. But Mr. Matsumoto says that Buddhism has become decrepit and is tottering to its fall, that it has lost its hold upon the upper classes,

that only women and old men frequent its temples. I am inclined to think this is true. Whatever may be the charms of its esoteric doctrines, Buddhism in its practical form is an empty ritual, does not receive the reverence of the intelligent part of the Japanese people, nor do its priests command their respect. Thus the better classes of Japan are left without religious faith or adequate ethical guide, unless Christianity can supply their needs; for they admit that their own code of morals is far behind that of Christendom. The intelligent men and women recognize this, and welcome the study of Christian morals, even when they shrink from professing Christianity as their religious belief, in the forms under which it has been presented to them.

What has been done by the Christian nations to answer the call for more light? What success have the missionaries met with, and what grounds of hope have we for the future? The answer to the first two questions I can give with some certainty. I have been furnished, by the kindness of the American missionaries in Tokio and Kyoto, with the history and statistics of their work. So far as figures mean anything in the domain of spiritual things, I can answer these two questions. But the third inquiry, regarding the future, presents a complex problem, in which I can do little more than state the forces that are at work and the general drift of opinion to-day.

As soon as the first treaties with America and the European powers were signed in 1854, the mission boards of the different Christian Churches sent their representatives to Japan to examine the situation; and in 1859, as soon as the right of permanent residence in the treaty ports was granted, preachers were sent there to stay. But a great work lay at the very threshold of their enterprise: they must learn the ways and habits of the people, conquer the language,— exceedingly difficult even now, with all modern aids,— construct lexicons and phrase-books for the assistance of newcomers, translate the Bible into Japanese and publish it; and, above all, they must overcome the prejudice against foreigners, and obtain the repeal of the laws against Christi-

anity. All this must be done in advance, to prepare the highway for the coming of the new faith, before the real work of conversion could begin. The same dreadful edicts, denouncing death against every Japanese preaching or even professing Christianity, were still in force, and were posted all over the empire.

In 1868 the Shogunate was abolished; but the new government renewed these hostile edicts, in spite of the remonstrances of the foreign ministers. At last the bitterness began to die out, and the prejudices slowly melted away. The edict against Christianity was much modified in 1873, and three years later it was entirely removed. In the former year, the Chinese calendar was abolished, and the Gregorian calendar adopted by the government. This was a signal move; for it meant a radical departure from Chinese guidance, and as such was bitterly opposed by the Chinese. Sunday was made a holiday in all government offices in 1876, which was a very considerable practical step towards public recognition of Christianity. The first native Protestant church in Japan was organized in Yokohama in 1872. Since then, the restrictions of residence have been removed; and missionaries and teachers are allowed to reside in every part of the empire. In 1884, the Japanese government abolished all official relations with the Buddhist and Shinto priesthood, and took from them the exclusive control of the burial-places. This gave the Christian Japanese the right of decent burial, and removed one more obstacle to the profession of Christianity.

To sum it all up, it is hardly an overstatement to say that both government and people have entirely reversed their attitude towards Christianity since 1873. The empress openly expresses her admiration at the position held by women in enlightened Christian countries and her desire to emulate it in Japan. The leading officials are kindly disposed towards Protestant Christianity, and inclined to aid its influence over the people. Japanese parents recognize the superiority of Christian morals, and send their children to the mission schools, even where they will not

profess themselves Christians. The mission schools have done much to spread the use of the English language, and the government in its turn teaches it in the common schools. This, again, promotes the work of the missions.

To show the progress of this work since 1876, when the edicts against the preaching and profession of Christianity were finally removed, I will give the statistics of the Christian Churches in Japan in three divisions: first, the Protestant Churches, combined in one total; second, the Greek Church; third, the Roman Catholics. In each case, the figures are taken from official statements published by the authorities of the Church which the mission represents.

PROTESTANT MISSIONS.

Present missionary force (not including wives of missionaries),	220
Organized churches,	200
" " partly self-supporting,	64
Present membership,	16,000
Native ministers,	100
Preparing for ministry,	175
Native contributions, 1886,	$27,000

There is other excellent work done by the Protestant missions besides maintaining their churches. They have established 63 schools, with 2,540 pupils; 7 theological schools, with 71 students; 109 Sunday-schools, with 4,132 pupils; 5 hospitals and 8 dispensaries. I have many more statistics of this noble work, which I regret must be omitted. I will, however, describe what they have done towards circulating the Scriptures in Japan; for they lay especial stress on that. They have published Old and New Testaments in Japanese characters, both entire and in separate books; also, a Japanese New Testament in Roman letters. These are produced very cheap in Tokio. The gospel can be furnished for four cents, a Japanese New Testament for thirty-seven cents. Since 1873, 450,000 Bibles, Testaments, and portions have been circulated in Japan. I cannot go further into detail, but will add that I was deeply impressed with the devotion of these men and women, and the faithful service they were doing, whether in the care of soul, mind, or body.

GREEK CHURCH MISSIONS.

Russian bishop,	1
Russian priests,	2
Native priests,	11
Native preachers,	104
Number of converts June, 1886,	12,546

The bishop and associates devote their time almost exclusively to education, and maintain a large school at Tokio, intending that the work shall be done through native agency.

ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION IN 1881.

Bishops,	3
European missionaries,	43
Churches,	80
Seminaries,	3
Students in these,	71
Catechists,	202
Schools and orphanages,	74
Scholars in these,	2,920
Japanese Catholics in 1881,	25,633

The numbers of the Catholics have undoubtedly increased very much since 1881, but I have no later statistics. Indeed, each of the three great missionary bodies claims a great increase of converts for each year, never so rapid as during the past twelve months. The Japanese government, I was told, is not friendly to the Roman Catholics, remembering the old troubles with them; nor do they favor the Greek Church, owing to its close connection with the Russian government, which furnishes the funds for its support, and which they suspect of having designs upon Japan. But I do not think they show any discrimination in the privileges granted to them. All are treated alike as to the freedom of teaching and preaching.

The hospitals and schools which I visited were sustained by Americans, and were an honor to the men and women engaged in them. They are well conducted, and the managers claim that they aid greatly in the objects of the missions. All persons are admitted without reference to religious belief, but it is asserted that the large majority

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who come under their influence are made Christians by them.

Rev. E. A. Lawrence, of Robe, in the *Andover Review* of last March, speaks of two features of the native Protestant churches, which seem to me very significant: first, their desire to be self-supporting and independent,— this is especially true of the Congregational churches; second, their disposition to cast aside sectarian divisions, and combine, so far as possible, in substantial union. The Rev. H. Loomis, agent of the American Bible Society, gives the same testimony: "One feature of the growth of Christianity in Japan has been the universal desire that the divisions that exist among Christians elsewhere should not be perpetuated in this land." There are some who even hope for a union of all the Protestant sects in one body,— a Protestant Church in Japan. This would add much to their strength in the contest with Catholicism and Buddhism, but it is a dream that can hardly be realized till all men are born of the same intellectual and spiritual bias. Still, the desire for union interests us, as showing a willingness among the Japanese to brush aside fine-spun creeds and come to united harmonious action; for these movements towards union have in each case originated with the native churches. This fact, taken in connection with their wish to be self-supporting and independent, leads me to believe that the Japanese will soon take entire charge of their churches, and develop a form of Christianity adapted to their own intellectual needs and their own ideas of church government. In every department of civilization, they show this same wish to dispense with foreign aid as soon as possible, and place their affairs on a basis wholly Japanese. As soon as the churches are able to do this, they will probably follow the same course. What will come next it is impossible to surmise, but I feel very sure they will soon take the reins in their own hands.

It also seems very probable that the Roman Catholic will become the prevailing faith of the lower classes of Japan. They are Buddhists at present; and the change to Catholicism is as easy now as it was three hundred years ago, when

it spread so rapidly over the southern part of the empire. The love of the beautiful, which amounts almost to a passion with these people, will find gratification in the gorgeous ceremonies and solemn ritual of the Church; and the conquests of Xavier may be repeated in our time. But, whether this forecast be true or not, there is field enough for all the workers at present. All the Christian missions taken together are but a drop in the bucket among thirty-seven million Japanese. There may be to-day seventy-five thousand nominal Christians, all told, in all the missions, not one-fifth of one per cent. of the total population. There is plenty of room for all without crowding.

In the mean time, although the nation appears to be moving towards Christianity, the educated classes do not seem to be attracted towards it. Not that they have any particular reverence for the native faiths,— for, as I said, only women and aged men frequent the old shrines,— but the upper classes seem to have no sympathy with the forms of Christianity which have been presented to them. Under the new *régime*, they have come in contact with the thought and the material civilization of the Christian nations, and are rapidly appropriating them. They recognize the superiority of our code of morals and ethics, and would gladly elevate the standard of their own nation to its plane. But in religious matters they stop at the threshold, repelled by the miraculous element, which is contrary to their experience and education. Their own schools and colleges are conducted on a purely secular basis, and teach only the orderly course of nature. The young men, who have been sent in great numbers to Europe and America for higher education, have imbibed the tone of thought prevailing there,— the desire to arrange the phenomena of nature in accordance with fixed laws of progress,— and have come back in full sympathy with this sentiment. Spencer, Huxley, and John Stuart Mill are eagerly read in Japan; and their influence pervades the educated classes. In this rationalistic temper, they approach the Christian religion. They apply the same rules of development to the progress of human nat-

ure as to the material world, and reject the miraculous element in religious as well as in profane history. To them, religion, whether it is religion in history or in the individual experience, is simply a plant of natural growth, springing up in orderly lines of development, and not the result of supernatural elements grafted upon our natural powers.

Of course, orthodoxy has no attraction for such minds. The form of Christianity which wins them must be one which presents it in its simple, human elements. Unitarians alone can persuade these men to enroll themselves as Christians; and it would be a great gain for Christendom if this could be attained, for they form the strongest intellectual force in Japan. These remarks apply not merely to the literary men of Japan, but in a more or less degree to a large and increasing body of people, educated in their public schools. Their excellent system of common and high schools will soon make them a well-educated people, well educated on a broad, liberal basis; and, when they approach these problems of religion, they will do it in a spirit of freedom impossible to our people. Their own old faiths never commanded their respect, and never received anything more than an external observance; and, in studying Christianity, they can approach the fountain-head free from the social and historic prejudices attached to the time-honored churches and creeds among our own people.

I do not make these statements on my own authority. I was often assured of this state of feeling by intelligent Japanese in their own country; and Mr. Matsumoto, by his article in the *Unitarian*, fully confirms it. Others have given the same testimony. In the London *Inquirer* of June 4, 1887, a report is printed of the remarks of the Marquis Tokugawa, a representative of one of the most distinguished families in Japan, at a public meeting in England. He there urged the English Unitarian Association to send a minister to Japan as soon as possible, to sustain the efforts of his friend, Mr. Yano, who was already trying to plant liberal Christianity there. I believe the American Unitarians would be surprised at the greeting they would

receive when it became known that they had come to proclaim Christianity in its simple, natural form, without the miraculous element. There are many young men, as I have said, scattered over Japan, who have been educated in America. Some have taken degrees a tour universities, some have already listened to Unitarian preaching. Many of these men are ready to join in a movement to promote liberal Christianity. Much of the hard work is already done for us. The English language is very generally taught in the common schools; and the Japanese tongue is thoroughly provided with grammars, lexicons, and all the equipment necessary for a student. The Bible has been published in Japan, and can be had as a whole or in parts, for use or distribution.

Our first work should be to prepare simple statements of our faith, accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus, without the accretions which have become attached to them in eighteen centuries of human speculation. These books should not be controversial, should not contain anything about the errors of orthodoxy. The Japanese knows nothing of these,—of total depravity, or election, or vicarious atonement. Such things would be men of straw to him. We should give him a positive statement of our positive belief, if we want to attract him. It should set forth the grand personality of Jesus as a teacher and leader of men, his tender sympathy for the suffering and the fallen, his stern rebuke of sin, his consciousness of God's nearness, his self-sacrifice for the truth. Let it present also the lofty ideal of true Christian character and its high standard of practical life, and say, in relation to God's dealings with men, that our highest conceptions of right are our conceptions of his righteousness, and the salvation of souls here and hereafter depends not on church or creed, but on the condition of the heart.

I lay this stress upon the preparation of a book, because I do not know one in the range of our literature which exactly meets these requirements. Our best books have been written to confront the attacks of orthodoxy, of which

the Japanese know little or nothing. We want now a hand-book of Unitarian Christianity, setting forth its truth as seen from the position of a man who is tired of Buddhism and looks for a higher ideal of life, but who shrinks from the creeds and the miraculous element of orthodoxy. We are really on new ground, looking at Christianity from a new stand-point; and the case requires a new statement. Such a book could be circulated in English; and it could be translated into Japanese and printed in Tokio, where labor and material are very cheap.

Tokio is the centre of liberal thought in Japan. It is near Yokohama, the largest foreign settlement. The Imperial University of Japan, with its surrounding schools, is located there. It is the residence of the government. The Cabinet Ministers and all the foreign ambassadors are there. Thus it becomes the centre of liberal influences and the literary as well as the political capital of Japan. Here should be the head of our movement. Preaching and distribution of liberal Christian literature should be undertaken from Tokio; and, as soon as a church is formed for a nucleus, charitable and humane organizations should be set on foot as practical illustrations of the fruit of Unitarianism.

Another field of work among the Japanese is right here in our own country. There are many hundreds of their young men living in our midst. I was told there were perhaps one thousand in San Francisco and four hundred in Oakland. They learn our language, read our books, attend our churches, and become at home in our thought. Some of them attend our Sunday-schools. Our orthodox friends are wide-awake to this chance, and already have missions among them; but many of them prefer Unitarianism, and attend our services apparently with great satisfaction. They are thoughtful and earnest. Their young minds are on the alert, probing to the bottom of things and asking questions which would try a doctor of divinity. These young men could be taken hold of, and with a little encouragement they would educate themselves into good Unita-

rians. Some among them are bright, and would make good preachers. Three or four hundred dollars a year from some generous soul would carry one of these young fellows through Meadville, and thus send a native apostle to Japan. Who will be the first to offer to do it? Our orthodox friends encourage the native preacher wherever they find one worthy of the place. Of course, we must eventually come to that system. The Japanese must, in the end, furnish their own preachers. The only question is, When and how shall we begin to educate them? I believe, if we are sure of the quality of the men, we can do nothing better than to fit these bright young fellows to teach their own people.

Since this article was undertaken, the news comes that the American Unitarian Association has determined to send a representative to Japan. It is a golden opportunity for honorable service. I know no field of labor which promises such a harvest as this, among a people whose intellect is free from the trammels of mediæval traditions, eager to share the ripest fruit of Christian thought. There will be no crown of martyrdom; but there will be a chance for a life of devoted service and a field strewn rich with opportunities to serve the cause of God and man, as splendid as ever lined the path of Xavier. If this movement is inspired with a resolution and devotion like his, it will meet with a success greater than his; for its victories will be everlasting, — no persecution can stamp them out. It will give a permanent direction to Japanese liberal thought, and reclaim for Christianity a powerful element for good that is now in danger of going to waste.

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